

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: DECEMBER 4, 2013

TO: MEMBERS OF THE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

FROM: T&ES STAFF

SUBJECT: AGENDA ITEM # 3 – ITEMS FOR CONSENT

ISSUE: Staff update to Transportation Commission on various ongoing projects

RECOMMENDATION: That the Commission receive the items for consent.

A. FUNDING UPDATE

The following is an update on funding and/or actions of major regional transportation bodies as they relate to the City. General funding updates of local, regional and national importance are provided below. Attachment 1 contains the Commission's regular *Monthly Update of Regional Transportation Board Major Actions and Funding*.

NVTA 70% Funds

House Bill 2313, which created a new source of revenue for transportation and gave NVTA the authority to distribute 70% of those funds, was determined to be legal by an appeals court on October 11, 2013. No appeal to the State Supreme Court was received by the filing deadline; however, an appeal was filed passed this deadline, which the Supreme Court may decide to hear.

VDOT has established a working group to define the Project Selection Framework for the HB599 Study. HB599 mandated that VDOT, in coordination with NVTA, CTB and DRPT, evaluate and rate at least 25 significant transportation projects in and near the Northern Virginia Transportation District. The study will identify high-priority regional transportation projects that alleviate congestion and assist emergency evacuation. Identification in the study will make these projects eligible for the 70% funds. While public transportation projects *may* be included in this list, they are not required to be on the list in order to be eligible for funding.

Staff anticipates that NVTA will approve a call for FY2015-FY2016 projects for the 70% funds at its December 12 meeting. The current deadline for project proposals is January 17, 2014. Staff will develop a proposed program of projects that is informed by the funding strategy discussed at the September 2013 Transportation Commission meeting, and will bring the proposal to the Transportation Commission for review and approval at its January 2014 meeting.

Performance Based Funding

The Transportation Services Delivery Advisory Committee (TSDAC), at the direction of the General Assembly, has proposed new methodologies for allocating operating and capital funds. The method for allocating *new* operating funds has been adopted by the Commonwealth Transportation Board and relies on a variety of transit service performance metrics. The City supported the overall methodology, although we disagreed with the approach for measuring Metrorail ridership.

The General Assembly also directed TSDAC establish tiers for capital funding assistance. The City supports the tiered approach proposed by TSDAC, in which replacement buses are matched at the highest rate, followed by facilities and then all other transit capital costs. Tiering can serve as a means to achieving our shared goal of a state-of-good-repair for transit agencies throughout the Commonwealth. In addition, the City agreed with TSDAC's proposal to provide multi-year capital funding agreements. This will allow jurisdictions and transit agencies to invest in major new or expanded facilities whose construction will likely span multiple years. By providing assurance that the Commonwealth has identified funding for the life of the contract, jurisdictions will be able to define a long-term funding plan spanning the life of the project.

City staff is concerned, however, with the proposal to change the basis for awarding capital funds from a non-federal share of the project cost to a total project cost. This element of the proposal was not required by SB1140 and undermines the positive benefit that would result from the tiering approach defined above. Most transit providers in Northern Virginia do not accept federal funds, all of which are passed instead to WMATA. By offering non-federalized service, we have been better able to effectively control transit costs. Historically, Northern Virginia jurisdictions have provided significant amounts of local funding for transit. The proposal to award capital funds based on the total project cost disproportionately penalizes Northern Virginia jurisdictions in comparison to other transit properties and jurisdictions across the Commonwealth. We would likely see less funding for our systems or be compelled to consider federalizing our operations. The City has prepared a letter to the TSDAC Chairman describing our concerns.

B. POTOMAC YARD METRORAIL STATION

The Potomac Yard Metro project is an infill Metrorail station located between the National Airport and Braddock Road Metrorail stations on the Blue and Yellow lines in the vicinity of the Potomac Yard Development.

The project team is working on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), which analyzes the socioeconomic, environmental, and transportation impacts of a no build and three build alternatives. The DEIS will address key environmental considerations, including air quality and climate change, transportation and land use, visual resources, parklands, historic and cultural resources, noise, vibration, wetlands and habitats, and temporary construction impacts.

As discussed last month, the project team has been investigating several options to mitigate impacts identified during the Draft EIS analysis. One of these options involves moving the CSXT tracks to the west, which would potentially allow Alternative B to be removed from

NPS-owned land and the 1999 scenic easement. City staff met with representatives of CSXT on November 13, 2013. At the meeting, CSXT staff asked a number of questions and engaged in a discussion of the details of the proposed option. As expected, no decision was reached at the meeting. CSXT staff stated that they would discuss the option internally with the appropriate people within their organization. They could not give a timeframe for a response to the City, but City staff will follow up in January.

If the response from CSXT is favorable, this mitigation option will be incorporated into the Draft EIS. Following incorporation of mitigation options, the Draft EIS will be completed and released for public review and comment.

For more information on the project, please visit www.alexandriava.gov/potomacyard.

C. CRYSTAL CITY/POTOMAC YARD (ROUTE 1) TRANSITWAY

During the first round of TIGER grants, the City received \$8.5 million to design and construct the Route 1 Transitway between Monroe Avenue and East Glebe Road. The City compiled additional grant funding and \$5.2 million in local funding to design/construct various elements of the Transitway project. The total cost of the Transitway including vehicles is approximately \$20 million.

Transitway construction began in July 2012. Runningway construction will be substantially complete by the end of December 2013. At the northern end, the developer has completed construction of the new northbound lanes of Route 1, which allowed traffic to shift to the new lanes and work to commence on the transitway lanes in that section. All regular concrete for the transitway has now been placed, with the colored concrete at East Glebe Road anticipated to be placed in the next few weeks. Crews have started the demolition of the former northbound lanes and excavation for the median between East Glebe Road and Evans Lane. At the southern end, work has included placing of pavement for the transition from the transitway to southbound Route 1 at the Monroe Avenue Bridge and completion of the colored concrete at the Potomac Avenue station.

Construction of the stations and installation of landscaping will take place in the Winter and Spring, with completion in Summer 2014. The additional time required is due to design considerations and unforeseen subsurface conditions:

- The stations will be a signature element of the Transitway, creating a unified experience for riders throughout the corridor. The station design mirrors the design of the stations to be constructed in Arlington. The stations are based on a customized design that had several opportunities for public input.
- The landscaping, featuring 12-foot medians, is a key element in transforming Route 1 into an urban boulevard that is welcoming for both pedestrians and transit riders. The ongoing construction has revealed that the medians are situated over an old roadbed and very poor soil. To ensure that trees and plants will survive in this environment, the contractor must break up any impervious surface such as subsurface concrete and add substantial planting material to the beds. These needs have expanded the scope of the landscaping element and required extra time for design.

The branded Metroway service will start with the opening of the Transitway, with buses running every 12 minutes between the Braddock Road Metrorail Station and Pentagon City. The service will operate in mixed traffic through Arlington County until early 2015, when their portion of the transitway is scheduled to open.

For more information on the Route 1 Transitway project please see visit:

<http://www.alexandriava.gov/tes/info/default.aspx?id=58644>

D. CAPITAL BIKESHARE

Capital Bikeshare has been very popular with residents and visitors to Alexandria, with over 20,000 trips, over 450 annual members and over 2,600 short-term memberships in the first year of operation. By comparison, Arlington has 2,256 annual members, and has been operating for three years and has 62 stations. Alexandria trips have steadily increased, with over 800 more trips per month in August 2013 in comparison to September 2012. The average duration of trip in Alexandria is 22 minutes, and the King Street Metrorail station is the busiest Capital Bikeshare station in Alexandria.

When initial budgets were prepared for Capital Bikeshare in Alexandria, staff conservatively estimated a 30 percent cost recovery from memberships and user fees in the first year, increased cost recovery in year two with a full cost recovery in the third year of operation. After one year of operations, cost recovery has greatly exceeded initial expectations, with cost recovery reaching 72 percent. As Alexandria expands its Capital Bikeshare network outside of Old Town, into less densely populated areas, we should expect that cost recovery will not be as aggressive since much of the revenue in Old Town has come from short-term memberships, which are largely tourists.

In the first year of operation, the operating subsidy for the existing 8 stations was \$57,363. When that is expanded to 16 stations in FY 2014, the annual operating subsidy cost is projected to be around \$159,000. During the FY 2015 budget process, expanding bikeshare in Alexandria from 16 stations to between 28 and 32 stations will be considered, with the added operating cost for this expansion at about \$160,000. Therefore, with a total of between 28 and 32 stations, the annual operating subsidy would be about \$319,000. Staff is currently not proposing an increase in TIP funding for bikeshare. To fund the operating subsidy, federal grants can be used to fund expansion of bikeshare, and \$1,275,000 in existing TIP funding for expansion of bikeshare can then be transferred to the TIP operating subsidy for bikeshare. The remaining \$1,410,000 needed for the operating subsidy can come from existing unspent TIP funds from the Holmes Run Greenway project, which is less expensive than originally estimated due to VDOT hydraulic requirements for Holmes Run. It should be noted that any further expansion beyond 32 stations would only occur after a review of usage and costs for bikeshare operations

E. PARKING STANDARDS FOR NEW DEVELOPMENT

The parking standards in Alexandria's Zoning Ordinance have not been updated since 1992. Non-auto travel has increased since current standards were set and there are indications that per household car ownership is declining. Moreover, parking is expensive to construct and unnecessary parking takes funds that could be used for amenities that serve the public. Recent small area plans have addressed this issue by establishing lower parking ratios or parking maximums rather than parking minimums. Individual development projects that

propose reasonable parking ratios (lower than those required by the zoning ordinance) require a waiver. This project will conduct the analysis to recalibrate parking standards for new development. It will involve a review of current parking standards, and assessment of parking supply and utilization in existing development projects along with an assessment of factors influencing parking demand, such as proximity to Metro/transit/carshare/Bikeshare, services such as grocery store, schools, etc., and the walkability of the neighborhood. The project also looks at car ownership analysis and on-street parking availability in for selected development sites, as well as best practices and standards for other similar jurisdictions.

The project will also hold a number of public meetings at key phases of the process, consistent with the *What's Next Alexandria* framework. A steering committee/advisory group is proposed, similar to the *Infill Task Force* and the *Old Town Area Parking Study Work Group*, both of which successfully worked through technically complex and potentially controversial issues. Their work resulted in recommendations that were generally supported by staff and the community and were approved by the Planning Commission and City Council. The steering committee will include representatives from the Planning Commission, Transportation Commission, Traffic and Parking Board, development community, and residents. We plan to establish the steering committee in January, 2014.

F. PAY BY PHONE PARKING

Over the past three years, the City's Department of Transportation and Environmental Services (T&ES) has worked closely with the Old Town Area Parking Study (OTAPS) Work Group to review/implement recommendations from the 2009 Parking Study. One of the recommendations, supported by both the 2010 and 2012 OTAPS Stakeholder Work Group, was to implement pay by phone parking technology. The pay by phone technology provides parkers an alternative to traditional meter payment and it allows parkers to pay meter fees through the use of a mobile phone at no cost to the City. Users must first set up an account online which can be downloaded at no cost to the user. The user's account is linked to the user's credit card, which charges a convenience fee of \$0.29 per transaction.

The City issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) for this technology in February 2013. Pango, the selected vendor through the RFP process, offers a simple pay-by-phone solution that would not only allow customers to pay for on-street parking via the mobile application, but also get information regarding the City's parking garages. In July 2013, the selection committee awarded the pay by phone contract to Pango. Pango's convenience fee was much lower than other vendors, and Pango was also more flexible and willing to customize its mobile application to fit the needs of the City including displaying information regarding the City's parking garages in the application (i.e. garage locations, rates, hours of operation, etc.). The soft launch to effectively test the application started on December 2, 2013. Staff and the vendor worked with the Office of Communications and Public Information on marketing and outreach plans. The official launch will take place during the week of December 9, 2013

G. LOWER KING STREET PEDESTRIAN STUDY

The City will begin a Lower King Street Pedestrian Study in early 2014. The purpose of the study is to analyze and identify impacts associated with converting the 100 block (Union to Lee Streets) of King Street to a pedestrian plaza. The study will identify traffic and circulation improvements, operational and maintenance needs, an implementation timetable

and process, and budgetary requirements to convert the 100 block of King Street into a pedestrian plaza accessible to the public to enjoy as a meeting and gathering place, and for dining, shopping, and a range of programmed activities. The study will be coordinated with the other projects in the vicinity including the Unit block of King Street.

The Lower King Street Pedestrian Study boundary will extend from the Queen Street on the north, the waterfront on the east, Duke Street on the south, and Fairfax Street on the west. The estimated duration of the design project is six (6) months for completion.

The study will examine various future (year 2035, assuming future development as approved in the Waterfront Plan) scenarios for the closure of the 100 block of King Street, including whether the closure be a pilot or permanent program, seasonal or year round, and operational daily or only on weekends, and a potential one-way traffic operation within the block. An assumption will be that the King Street trolley will maintain its terminal on King Street between the Strand and Lee Street. Specifically, the study will include an analysis of circulation (vehicular, pedestrian, bicycle), trolley access, bus (including tour bus) circulation and pick up/drop off, loading access, parking (on-street, garage access, valet, passenger drop off/pick-up areas), and emergency vehicle access.

A key component of the study will include public outreach, including outreach to the business community, resident stakeholder groups, the Transportation Commission, Planning Commission, Waterfront Commission, and Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Group. Staff anticipates bringing an update to the Commission in early 2014 to identify key issues and needs.